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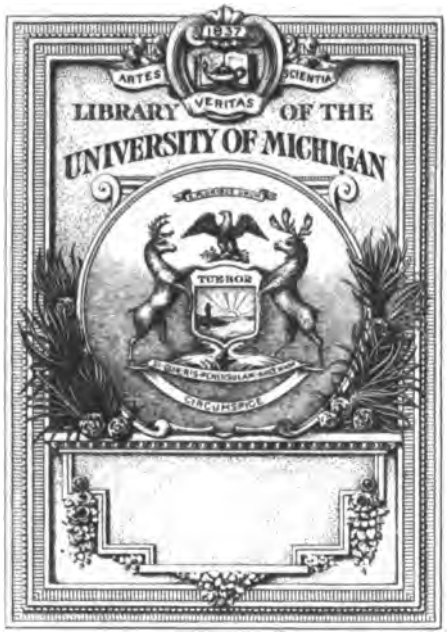
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FRANCES JENNINGS


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A TOUR IN A DONKEY-CART

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PLATE 1.

A TOUR IN A DONKEY-CART

BY FRANCES JENNINGS

WITH THIRTY-TWO COLLOTYPE REPRODUCTIONS OF HER DRAWINGS AND A NOTE BY PROFESSOR HENRY TONKS AND AN INTRODUCTION BY ISABEL DERBY



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LETTER FROM PROFESSOR TONKS

I AM writing away from the Slade School, so I am unable to give any dates, but I will tell you of a few things I remember of Frances Jennings. She was always difficult to teach, in fact, was unteachable, and I do not think we can take any credit at the Slade for having made her what she was. She had a sense of form as expressed by line more highly developed than in any other draughtsman I have ever met. She drew best when she simply followed the outline, relating one contour to the other without any kind of calculation. If she used shadows, they did not often help her drawing. She was entirely dependent on the model and seemed to have very little power of drawing from memory. The human figure was all that seemed to interest her, and though she would have liked to express all sorts of strange mental experiences, she never seemed to me to succeed. Naked children she chiefly drew, I don't think because she liked them, but because they were more

easily obtained, and she was able to have two or three posing together, which led to some of her best drawings. I think as far as her drawing went it was done quite easily; she could not have continued working long on any drawing. Her departure from the Slade, the result of a sudden paralysis, was a great disappointment to us there, as we were profoundly interested in her remarkable gift. It is useless to speak of what she might have become, we must make the best of what remains. Her drawings will interest none but the draughtsman, fortunately they are entirely free from sentimentality.

The interesting thing to note, as I hinted above, is that with a mind extraordinarily impressionable to all sorts of mystical influence, her drawings remained direct statements of facts, the result of her own immediate observation; facts stated with a simplicity and often with a grace without a rival.

HENRY TONKS.

A TOUR IN A DONKEY-CART

A TOUR IN A DONKEY-CART

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE following extracts from a bundle of letters need some explanation and addition. They tell of a romantic journey —not in far countries or among strange scenery— but along the familiar roads in England's green and pleasant land. They tell of days beneath the sun, of nights beneath the stars, and of days and nights tempestuous and gloomy. They tell of the beauty and the prettiness of the English country-side; of the magic of wild places, and of the warmth and comfort of little homes. They show us these things as seen by one to whom beauty and the search for beauty were the sole purpose of life; and in the telling they reveal a tragedy, as much of temperament as of circumstance.

The style of these letters is characteristic and interesting, simple and quite unaffected, even though

the striving after perfect expression gives rise to little mannerisms which, in a more accomplished writer, may be counted as affectations. They tell the adventures of a solitary woman travelling in a quaint little equipage, in search of health, life, and beauty along the open road.

Who was this solitary wayfarer? What manner of woman was she—young or old, beautiful or ugly? The reader's mind would be teased by these questions were he to read these letters without introduction. It would be like driving in a strange vehicle on a dark night, listening to the charming talk of an unseen driver of whom one knew nothing. It is, then, to give the little donkey-cart and its intrepid driver a fair start-off that I write what I know of the life and nature of Frances Jennings.

She was pre-eminently her mother's daughter —like her in appearance as well as in mind and character. The mother was a certain Christiana Cresswell. She came of a good old North-country family, which had, it seems, a reputation for oddness: its members were curiously detached, and strangely lacking in family feeling.

Chrissy Cresswell, when quite a young girl,

gained a scholarship for the South Kensington School of Art, and came up to London to study. Her father, vicar of Teignmouth, Devon, used to coach young men for Oxford. Among them was John Jennings, who fell in love with Chrissy. Her parents objected to the match, but the girl was away from them in London, and in 1881 the young couple married. John Jennings was then a clerk in Balfour's Irish Office, but soon after marriage he gave up his appointment and made a precarious living by journalism. Mrs. Jennings also wrote—"turnovers" for the *Globe*, and suchlike articles. She made a small income, too, by drawing designs for Art Needlework for the South Kensington School, and for various firms.

Four girls were born, one of whom died in infancy; Frances, the second child, was born in 1885. Five years later John Jennings died of consumption. The young widow made a brave fight against poverty, unassisted by her relatives, well-to-do people though they were. They had never forgiven her her marriage, and since then had had nothing to do with her. It was a desperate and uneven struggle, and after a few years' fight for herself and her three little girls the poor young

mother developed cancer, and died in hospital in 1896.

Frances could only remember her as broken by poverty and illness, but she treasured to the end the memory of her beauty.

Before her mother's death Frances had been elected to St. Anne's School at Redhill—an institution to which she always referred as a "Charity School." She was a lonely, dreamy child, often scaring her school-fellows with her strange ways and fantastic tales. She would draw weird beasts and goblins, and would be found on moonlight nights leaning out of the window in her nightgown, seeing things which never were on sea or land. All her life she belonged to Fairyland: if ever there were such creatures as changelings Frances Jennings was one. There was an elfin quality about her which all her friends felt, but which she herself would not, or could not, recognize. With all her passionate desire for human intimacy, and in spite of her great attraction for all kinds of people, this "faery's child" remained all her life a little outside the comfortable circle of less gifted but more favoured mortals.

She never spoke of her childhood except in

answer to questions. All she told me of her life at school was her sense of isolation; her unfailing capacity for getting into scrapes; and a school-girlish adoration that she nursed for one of the mistresses. From her aunt I learnt that she was exceptionally good at mathematics, and took honours in the Senior Cambridge examinations.

Her younger sister writes: "You may wonder at my knowing so little, but we were really rather unhappy little children after my mother's death, for no one seemed to care for us, we seemed to be so dreadfully in the way." What a world of misery is conjured up by this pathetic little sentence. Can any child recover from such a tragic start in life? In Frances's case it was the beginning of tragedy. It branded her in her own mind as "not wanted," and left a wound in her nature which never healed.

She left school at fifteen, and went to live with her grandmother at Teignmouth. She worked at the School of Art there, but most of her leisure hours were spent in lonely wanderings.

In 1903 she was sent to a cousin in Dumfries and continued her art education at the Dumfries Academy. There she, or perhaps her family for her, decided that she should take up art as a career;

and in 1904, with £300 bequeathed to her by her grandmother, she went to London to study. She began in the female School of Art at Queen's Square, but a year later left there and started at the Slade School. Here her exceptional talent was soon recognized, and her beauty and charm won her much admiration and a few staunch friends. She stood singularly apart from the usual amenities of an art-student's life. She was lonely and detached here as everywhere, and on Sundays and holidays would escape to the woods at Hampstead, and for the summers to wild and lonely places in Scotland.

She was something of an enigma both to her teachers and friends. She showed flashes of genius in her work, and could do with no apparent effort what another student would strive for with patient endeavour and then fail to accomplish. It was difficult to see how she would use her undeniable gift. Whatever she might have achieved in art, it was unlikely that it would have been anything of a saleable nature; and the idea of teaching was intolerable to her. Wherever she went, she gave an impression of greatness: it was generally expected that she would one day fulfil her promise by some work of genius.

After two years at the Slade School she spent a winter in Paris; more, she said, for the sake of a new experience than for any definite reason with regard to her art.

The summer of 1908 found her back again in London. It was a very hot season, and she lodged in a slum in Bloomsbury, half-starving herself and utterly careless of her health. Since she had left Scotland she had never been properly fed or cared for. She was, and she remained all her life, quite ignorant of values, whether of money, or food, or rent, or clothing; she knew nothing, and cared less, about the daily necessities of life.

Moreover, her natural leaning towards asceticism had been exaggerated by an emotional attraction to Roman Catholicism. The reality of religion seems never to have touched her; but the beauty of the churches and services made an irresistible appeal to her. Added to this was a childish adoration for the priest who prepared her. She used afterwards to say that she became a Catholic "to please" this priest; but there is a thick exercise book that bears witness to the fact that she gave more time and thought to her religion than she afterwards allowed. Be this as it may, she worked at art and religion under

the worst possible conditions, and her strength was not equal to the task. She suddenly collapsed with an acute attack of myelitis. For months she lay in hospital, and was finally discharged—paralysed in the left leg. She said she suffered very little physically, after the recurrent attacks of horrible pain which heralded her break-down; her mental agony—though she never spoke of it—must have been intense.

Her unhappy childhood had hardened her against the blows of Fate. Her very childishness and unpractical nature no doubt helped her in that she could accept things as a child accepts them; but nothing can detract from the high courage with which she faced her broken life. Walking had been her great recreation—she was to walk no more; she had been free and independent—she was now in bondage to charity and her own impotence. Worst of all, to her entirely æsthetic outlook, her beauty was marred, her grace of movement—a very real delight to all who had eyes to see—was gone for ever. To her the ugliness of disease was worse than the inconvenience; and this was not mere vanity, but a comprehensible hatred of being ungainly in a world, to her, made for beauty only. She speaks in

these letters of practising to walk on crutches; she would never have done this in public—never, at any rate, before the eyes of anyone she loved. From the common-sense point of view this is morbid, almost mad; but the common-sense point of view is not the only one—possibly not even the finest or most useful. The "utility" of such as Frances lies in the strength with which they oppose it, and the single-mindedness with which they follow their own vision. Frances paid a high price for her convictions. If movement meant ugliness, then movement must be restricted to the absolutely essential.

Meanwhile, the question of maintenance was becoming urgent. Her small capital was nearly exhausted, and, though a kindly and sympathetic relative offered her a home, she declined it. She feared that her will might be captured, and felt that her best chance of happiness lay in living alone. The dangers and difficulties of such a life in her helpless state were nothing to her, and indeed "helpless" is not a word to apply to Frances Jennings, in spite of the fact that most of her days had to be spent on her back.

Friends came forward to help, and six ladies undertook to provide for her during her life. She

seemed to have no qualms about accepting their offer; the truly generous can receive such gifts in the spirit in which they are given. She had a small fund of money for emergency, and she was given twenty-five to thirty shillings a week for ordinary living expenses. Everything possible was done in the way of medical advice and alleviations for her state of health—short of breaking her will and making her submit to other people's conceptions of what was best for her. To the casual visitor she lived in the direst and most abject poverty. Had she possessed the wealth of Crœsus she would have lived in very much the same way; her tastes were simple in the extreme—she lived among visions, not among things. In a letter she wrote later about decorating her little donkey-cart, she said:

"I will have gay hangings of beautiful colours. I must think out how to do this and yet preserve the freedom of simplicity." Add "beauty" to this last phrase, and you have what might have been a motto for her—beauty, and the "freedom of simplicity."

There was the making of an ascetic saint in her, all except the essential part—the religious conviction. Her elder sister, by the way, threw up an excellent post to become a nun in an Anglican community in

South Africa. One can also picture Frances as a happy savage, in spite of her beautiful natural manners and gentleness. There was a strain of really wild cruelty in her, kept in check though, and rarely showing itself, that made one think of a primitive woman; or rather—again comes that impression of another world—of an elfin creature of the woods and hills. She was out of time and out of place in the modern world of London; and this as much before as after her illness.

For a year or so she lived in rooms—mostly in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea—with an attendant, or rather a series of them, and tried to submit herself to the wishes of her friends. Among them were some of our greatest living artists, who encouraged her to draw, and even to get together a little class. But her power of concentration was gone, at any rate for the time, and she felt that she could never draw again.

It was at this time that I first met her, and as there are no good portraits of her, I must describe her appearance, as best I can, in words. She was twenty-three, but looked younger, as with so much lying down she could not keep her hair dressed, but wore it in two long plaits. She was of the Gretchen type of beauty, fair, with the colour of a wild rose; large, full,

sensitive mouth; aquiline nose, fine and clean cut; and deep-blue, lovely eyes, child-like and innocent. She was tall and largely built, and though fragile-looking, not emaciated. After months of indoor life she lost her beautiful colour, and under her eyes came the tint of the wood anemone; when living in the open, she was delicately tanned and could bear the fiercest sun without any shade for her face, and without ever getting scorched red. Her forehead was white and high, a really noble brow, with the hair brushed back from it. Her hair hung in two thick flaxen plaits to below her waist.

I could never reconcile her profile with her full face; she never turned her head but what I had the sensation of looking at an entirely different person: I felt that all her naughtiness and that strain of cruelty were centred in her hooked nose!

She dressed in bright blue, pretty, smocked dresses, slightly unconventional, but in no way startling as were the gipsy-like garments she later on adopted. She went out daily in a bath-chair, or in a friend's carriage, and little was seen on the surface of the agony of mind that she was enduring.

After some months, however, her wild nature rose in arms against her restrictions. She pined for some

rugged sea-coast, and talked of Brittany. A friend was going there, and they planned to make the journey together. The arrangement fell through, the friend could not go; but Frances had, by that time, set her heart on Brittany, and nothing could deter her. A friend of the friend's offered to take her across the sea, and so it was. The journey was accomplished in spite of its difficulties, and Frances found herself at Pouldu, near Audierne, alone and miserable among foreign fisher folk. I have before me a letter she wrote from there to the lady who was to be her best and most understanding friend throughout life. In it there is not a word that would lead one to suppose that she was terrified of her surroundings, waiting and yearning for her friend to fetch her away. It is an agonized letter, but no breath in it of material discomfort. She writes mostly of her friend's trouble, and of her love for her; but these sentences speak of the torment she is enduring: "I believe your great peace stills even my grieving and agitated soul"; and again: "If I wrote to you of myself at this moment I could only write to you of tears. But in you I find joy for my tears. Do not refuse me, or anyone who seeks you in awe-stricken love."

I cannot find that she wrote to anyone of her

plight. She used to be carried down to the beach, and lie watching the distant ships, longing to be on board one of them and bound for England. Her friend was to have joined her during the summer and brought her home; but, as the months went by and no one came, she made up her mind to come back alone. She would ask the porters to carry her across the platforms, and from the train to the boat; her French was not fluent, but it would suffice.

So back she came, and the autumn of 1910 found her once more in England and in Chelsea. After trying various lodgings she settled for the winter in a little flat in Church Street. There she stayed, never going out of doors, till the spring sent the call of the open ringing through her blood. We thought some kind of nature-cure might refresh her, and read of a place in Hampshire where she could live out of doors in a little wooden shelter, and yet be looked after in a way that would not worry her.

So to Hampshire she went, and from there she writes:

"A happy fate has led me here. I find all things here unusual, or shall I say natural. It is a very poetic life, and every one is occupied with so much happy work. They build the huts and chop the

wood and carry the water and ride ponies, and cook the food, and gather the fire-wood. There is a great raftered common room, with a great wooden table and blazing log fire, and shelves of books, and all the cups and saucers have different coloured gay flowers on them. There is nothing that jars. The house is really all this one room. I am out in the open on the edge of a secluded little wood. There is a deep bay of delicate woodland, almost like a green bird's nest, and it opens on to far distances of fields below.

"The nights seem to be most mysterious, I see such millions of stars and there seem such great airs moving, and all is so solemn.

"We eat just what we like of simple food; and they provide me with everything, even note-paper. I find it a little cold, but the air makes me feel so strong.

"Buddha* keeps falling down trees and into mud and water, his white nose glows quite pink with the freshness of new life. This really is a little paradise on earth."

Here she met many people, some of whom she liked and one of whom she loved. Here her short

* Her cat.

love-story began and ended; here she spent the happiest hours of her life. She left Hampshire in July, brimful of the joy of loving and being loved. But happy love was not hers for long. Her tragic fate hung over her, and again she had to drink the cup of misery to the very dregs. When I next saw her—in the spring of 1911—she spoke of her love as dead, though her lover still lived. She was then lodging in a loft in Limehouse, and it was here that the idea of a gipsy life materialized. A sturdy little donkey and a coster's barrow were bought in the East End, and sent down to Sussex; and from there, in April, she set forth on her journey. I saw her again in June. I was staying at a farm on the borders of Sussex and Hampshire, and on coming home one afternoon was asked by the farmer's wife to step round to the barn. There to my astonishment I found Frances; she was seated among the straw in a maize-coloured dress, her little donkey browsing quietly beside her, and in the background a quaint little cart with a black canvas cover. Her journey so far had not been much of a success: she had been worried by policemen, and frightened by gipsies; and though, as she said, something ahead lured her on, she was not altogether enjoying her

adventures. She stayed with me some weeks, resting herself and her donkey, and planning how to present a still finer picture to anyone with eyes to see who met her on the road. She was not satisfied with the colour of the cart, and she longed for a golden cover to it—this sounded exuberant until she explained it was to be of oilskin. She also wanted a new dress, which she made herself out of sack canvas, and afterwards stretched on the ground and painted with bright blue dye. This because none of the patterns of stuffs from the London shops suited her fastidious taste. She also painted her cart a bright blue: all this with intent as deliberately artistic as that of any artist with canvas and paints.

On Midsummer Day we went for a walk, that is to say, Frances drove in her little cart, and I walked beside it. We tucked some flowers in the donkey's harness and in the lamps, and when we passed some bryony in the hedge I pulled a long trail and wreathed the hood of the cart—all in honour of the day. It *did* look a pretty little toy going along the summer lanes. Not that anyone looked twice at it, except one man in a motor who waived delightedly till he was out of sight. We knew we were safe from undue attention—Sussex folk are hard to move.

Sometimes I had a lift in the cart, and once when we were both driving, we met two men with flutes coming towards us. Frances pulled up and asked if they would pipe us a tune for a penny. This they did, and prettily they piped too. Frances solemnly handed them a penny each, at which they were so pleased they said they would like to play us a little more. After that we bid one another good day, and all went our ways pleased with the transaction.

After some weeks of rest and recuperation Frances felt she must start again on her adventurous journey. She now thought it better to furnish herself with introductions to people who would give her a welcome, rather than trust to luck. The first part of the journey, when she had often put up for the night by the wayside, and had tried to keep to wildish places, had really been a terrible ordeal. For instance, she would tell of how one evening she pulled up in a lovely little dell, and was startled in the night by a black head being thrust into her cart and a rough voice asking who she was and what she was doing there. A party of gipsies turned in for the night, and were not too pleased to find an interloper on their ground. Frances explained that she was a poor girl seeking health in that manner, after

which they were really kind to her, the woman bringing her tea and promising she should not be disturbed. Very late she heard the clatter of hoofs and a whispered conversation, as a horseman drew up and joined the party. She caught enough between inquiries as to "Dirty Dick" and "Wicked Charlie," to convince her that the horse had been stolen. Sleep fled for the night. One or two such encounters decided her to make her way mostly from house to house where she would be expected; though every now and then, as will be seen, she struck out into the wild again. She went from me to a lady who gave her many introductions on her road, and to whom this charming series of letters was written. Before leaving them to speak for themselves I quote from a letter to this lady from one of the friends to whom Frances was sent. It gives an excellent idea of the impression made by this extraordinary girl as she passed on her difficult way:

"You will be thinking, I know, of Frances Jennings' visit to me. Of course we were quite under the spell of her wonderful, courageous, child-like spirit, and so was every one who came to see her. She is coming back to this district in about a week or less, as an artist of ours is painting her

and her turn-out. He simply lost his head with delight when he saw it all, and was round at 8 a.m. to go on with the sketches. I feel I ought to thank you most heartily for sending her to me."

Unfortunately, the sketch was never finished and I cannot find that there is any good portrait of her in existence.

ISABEL DERBY.

January, 1916.

Ditcham.
16. 8. 12.

I was delayed a week in arriving here so that is why you have not heard from me. I was splendidly happy this morning when your letters came down to me. I felt a great sense of the beginning of success in my voyaging—which to the time I met you had been, on the whole, the extreme of wretchedness, and nearly devoid of hope. More wretched than anyone could imagine, without having gone through the same experience. I think you are storming me with kindness. . . . I am so *delighted* to have so many addresses—it is like sitting down to a feast. . . . I will pay close attention to your directions, as to writing to your friends, when I am about to trespass on their hospitality. How nice they are to consider such things as hurdles for me. Such forethought makes one expect a welcome, and that is a warm thought to carry with one in solitary space.

I believe you have really made it possible for

me to reach Exmoor and beyond . . . You see, in all probability I shall lead this kind of life for some years, perhaps always. . . .

I think in my state of health, and with my helplessness, it is best to allow immense time for movements. But how easy, with the course worked up, will the return journey be. This is a long letter, but I have a great kindness to thank you for.

What doors, too, Miss Neal's letter opens for me. I want to read it over carefully, but first I am writing to you. I think I come across much of the material she is wanting, but it needs some knowledge of folk-lore to discern what is genuine. I should feel proud if I could find any fragments of the things she wants, and, as you wisely saw, my way of life takes me into the very midst of such things. By the way, you know I shall not trouble your friends for anything beyond a bit of field for my cart and a pail of water; giving me a day or two of rest, and if they offer it—of friendly conversation.

Even certain words in the letter concerning folk-lore give me a strange and wild excitement. And it makes me happy to think I am capable of undertaking some sort of work—such as collecting folk-lore.

Here I am with such nice things as apples and bees. I am learning the names of different apples. Harvest apples (*i.e.* red apples), cat's head apples, summer apples.

And I get the girl at the farm to tell me about the springs of water about the place.

I shall write again soon.

FRANCES JENNINGS.

Oakshott Hanger,
Hawkley, Hampshire.

I am so delighted at your kindness, I am setting to work writing letters, and how pleased I am to see a prospect of modern ideas to read. Not that one can take them all up, but among them one discovers one's personal track into the New; how kind you are to make this possible to me. I think, often, if some one gives one a start on their wider knowledge of the world, one soon find one's own feet.

I think at times Nature feels immensely void and desolate and crushing when one is, for the time, out of connection with human thought.

And papers and pamphlets give one a survey of what is going on in a simple form.

I think I shall generally have an address for my letters and will wait at it till they arrive—thanks to your kindness! What I found in the woods last year was a great danger of growing wilder and wilder, and more and more unfitted for social intercourse. How splendid, too, the prospect of addresses to get me on my way. How kind you are thus to take the interest of a casual wanderer to heart.

Yours very truly,

FRANCES JENNINGS.

I am away to-night, I think, from Oakshott until Thursday night.

What a nice surprise the coming of your note made.

I am so glad you understand, too, the vagueness of time and distance when travelling this way. And how nice you are to say "only just let me know when you are going on to the places."

You have no idea how my prospects are changed for happiness since you have found these houses for me on my way on. They are like oases in my desert —and at them I can make pauses and collect my thoughts for further action.

You see it's almost impossible to put up for more than a night at the wayside in the same place. They move one on.

But I love to pitch along the road a night or two, on the way to a certain destination.

When I saw you I did not know I should be going to delay here—I thought I was going on for Salisbury immediately.

"The Little Paper" amuses me. I am rather a baby and ignorant and yet interested in the language of science and the elementals of stars and heats and spaces and seas and so on, in which it seems to revel.

Do you know when one has very happy fortune it takes one's breath away, so I feel at present about the things you have done for me—I am almost struck dumb by suddenly seeing a change from extreme misery to success. When I started in this cart I had many dreams, and after all these months, at last they seem solidifying themselves—thanks to you. And it was not as if I had demanded of the world any more than its ordinary subsistence though I have realized more.

I think I should like to come to Steep a day or two in the middle of one of these weeks and put up a

night in the hedge, going and returning. Perhaps I could find a corner of a field in some farm without troubling Mr. Badeley. I noticed one or two in passing.

I liked Steep because there seemed many people in it. And, although I live for the most part with rustics, I delight in listening to or speaking with people who have mental expression and who are more of the world.

You emphasize in a new idea to me the fact " that to—in a way—live as one of the Folk " and among them, is the most basic stand by which to measure one's being in the thing they *are*.

Also when you say the old things are fixed and done and the new in a way have the uncertainty of motion I am interested.

You are putting colour and composure into my formerly lonesome and almost featureless strugglings.

FRANCES JENNINGS.

Wilsford Manor,
Thursday.

I am only going to tell you happy things in this letter.

I am in the sun, and by me on the grass I have

many small "Butter" apples spread out at hand, and I am burning huge lumps of pine and oak.

Tuesday I went many miles along a lonely road up and down great curves in a wind, and towards evening I saw scattered clumps of bushes and rabbits running about like dogs or sheep, so I drove across the turf and hid my cart out of sight from the road. I tied up the little ass "Eve" under a small tree close to me, and a great owl with feathered wings came in the dark, and I lit a small fire and boiled some vegetables, and sat in the wind and ate my supper. The night was white with a moon, and the wind as ice. I was all alone, no one saw me. I slept very long.

The next day, Wednesday, I saw Stonehenge, and found it satisfying. It was huge and heavy, and square-hewn great masses and gaps. I thought I liked such architecture and would like to live in such a house. It made me laugh with its great wind-spaces of its round wall. I saw it in sun, and then standing in a terrible gloom. I love great stones—its plainness and weight—and its standing.

Then in the teeth of a wind of ice, which had no gentleness in it and cut me into the quick, I came down into a beautiful thatched village, with houses

with eyes of thatch, and dark shaven thatch, and beautiful weaving of crossed and sewn twigs reminding me of fir trees.

And on the grey wall of one house was painted in raying white, an Adam and Eve standing at each end, and with two cocks between the man and woman with white spread feathers.

I was dreadfully tired last night and this morning.

I tried to write letters, but my eyes kept closing till I felt I must start sleeping, and I did.

But now I am beginning to pluck up energy for new essays at opening life and experiencing its exaltation and happiness and its love. It is a great happiness to me to write to you.

FRANCES JENNINGS.

Swindon.
7. 10. 12.

Your last letter did delight me. I have to steel my heart to go out continuously into strange ground and among strangers. Sometimes I feel so unattached that the only consciousness I hold is—that I am in the world. It is strange to move along in my cart in silence and unknown land, and among strangers, and unexpected anywhere, and in great fear of officious persons putting a stop to my career

before I have a chance to become full-fledged; so that I am obliged to live furtively and hold my tongue. Only I feel the more difficult and impossible one's acts, the richer is their final yield; and I think personal experience is, in a way, the only basis of personal law, as to what one does. At present, in my life, I cannot see what to make of it (my life), but I know it is good to harness up the little ass and keep on the move. . . .

How I value your slightest warmth of heart towards me; that is the ray under which one is no more an exile in the world. My eyes are open as I move through what is part of the world—to discoveries of love and life in the world, and to beauty.

Rabsom Farm,
Wednesday.
October (?).

I am starting early to-morrow morning. To-night five village people are coming to have supper in the hedge with me and each of us is going to bring part of the supper. The village baker is one of the number! I bought two pennyworth of yeast and baked a beautiful loaf in my ashes. It was a bit leaden the second day but that was because I did not cook it quite long enough. I think I shall do

better to use yeast than to try eating unleavened bread. The village people are very shy, but tortured with curiosity. They generally arrive in a sheepish fashion, one supported by the other, and I don't let them off easily, but make them break the ice themselves. One wretched little man, yesterday, approached my cart by the dry bed of a deep stream, and came half-way into view up through a sort of grand rabbit hole in the hedge! and then he daren't come quite to the surface, but had the bold face to wave a few dead sticks and say he'd come to bring me fire-wood. And a beautiful young woman came and said to me, "I am a wild 'un"—and we roasted eggs in the ashes and had no spoons, and she said, "I shall eat my egg as an apple."

She has a face with beautiful red blood glowing and changing and burning in it in the sun; and in each of her eyes, that are brown, is a burning orange spot such as are in the wings of a butterfly; and she has dark hair and scarlet lips and is laughing.

I expect I shall reach Minchinhampton within a week.

I talked to an old man on the road, and he told me a stone at the wayside I passed was called The Serpent's Head; and of how he dug open an earth-

work, up on the plains, and under his spade something crumbled and he raised it with care and it was the horn of a wild red deer in the earth; and then sadly, another time, he unearthed a vase, and in it was what was a tiny dead infant and there were the pins of its dress with it. This is the strangest land, full of great stones (Avebury), and a great tumulus made by the hands of men that stands all alone.

FRANCES JENNINGS.

Minchinhampton.
Oct. 18.

I feel wound up to go on and about with the cart; it is unreasonable but instinctive. . . . Shall I tell you a little about my journey here? I left Rabsom Farm—a shepherd there says in Jan. or Feb. if about there I may go "lambing" with him and pull up my little cart by his shepherd's van "in the snow, in the time of the little lambs" up on the turf plains.

I went along all day and looked up a lonely spot on my way so that I might spend an undisturbed night at the roadside perhaps, I thought, on some plain or in some forest or along a turf track. But as I went along, towards dusk, people said Lydiard plain is the headquarters of the gipsies. There are others there, so I thought I had better not go there,

and I got very tired and passed through a dusty little town (Wootton Basset) and then, to my fear, the dusk came and the dark and I still seemed on a main road, and dare not drive on to the grass because there might be ditches. I lit up a scrap of candle and had to beat poor Eve to hurry her on. Then I met a man and asked him to tell me of a lane I could hide myself away in, or of a farm, but he was unfriendly and said there was a village and an inn coming where I could ask. Then I got into the beginning of the village and asked some people, standing in the dark by a cottage, if they had a piece of field I could pull up in; but they only said go on to the inn. Then I went to the next cottage and saw a scrap of light through a chink in the hedge.

So I lifted up my voice and stopped little Eve at the door and said, "Will you come out?" I heard them listening, but they would not answer or open the door.

Then I heard the husband coming up the road in the dark and he came to my elbow and I started my story again, and said I did not want to go to the inn, then to my happiness he said, "Seeing how you are placed you shall come into our field." And he unlocked the gates and "the Missis" came out and

they treated me so decently, pulled me close to their cottage and made me warm tea, and tied up and unharnessed my donkey for me and said constantly, "Isn't there any other thing we can do?" I fell fast asleep, and in the morning was in the trimmest little green field with young apple trees, and they kept three cows—one "Buttercup"—and green vegetables. They gave me, as I left, three horribly sour, large green apples, "for my health"! they said, and they again made me tea for breakfast in the grandmother's tea-pot, that was of black earthenware and made me think of bog oak, and they harnessed and watered the donkey and saw me off on the road. The farm was a small farm belonging to the man himself.

The next day I got into a farm in daylight, the first I asked at.

They had a hedge of filberts, and the girl told me of an old woman at Crudwell who made mead, that she called metheglin, and that made one drunk.

They gave me a large faggot, a bag of filberts, apples, and pears, a slice of cake, a heart of celery, a pot of honey, a firm-hearted cabbage, and a bag of potatoes, and refused any money.

Don't you think I must start a "Begging Book,"

with items of what the houses on my road are capable of filling my "Begging Bags" with!

I think I shall write "The book of presents." I find such poetry in their gifts. One man said, "You must not go away empty-handed!"

Then I started the next day and my donkey would only weep and seemed tired to death, I had to flog her on, which I hated doing, and then she would only go fast two or three steps and then go slower and slower.

I got among the strangest hills, very small and deep, and I reached a good distance and I thought even though it was evening I would have new shoes put on my donkey's feet and I went up into a village, high on a hillside, and they made heavy little iron shoes with little grips to them for what they called her dainty feet, but the dark came on too soon and I did not want to beg them in the village to find a place for me, so I set my face in the dark towards Minchinhampton, feeling hopeless of pushing on there that night; and the hills seemed to grow so steep and difficult so I thought I must give it up. It is hard enough to find a house in the dark on the road, but a boy told me of a man who had a farm on the top of the hill, so with

quaking heart and a sort of despair, I boldly drove into his passage. I saw a big man leaning over some pens in the yard, so I boldly said, "I want to see the farmer."

He came right up, graciously and kindly, and said, "I am what you might call that sort of thing."

So I stammered my tale and said, "Mayn't I stay in your passage, or your yard, or your field?" And he said, "Oh yes, but the field is cold, look at this shed. It is our duty not to turn away those who want a night's rest, and to help one another. I would not turn anyone away, come in the house and sleep and shall the Missis make you some tea to drink?"

I only saw him in the pitchy dark, but he was so benign to me and the little ass, and left me to sleep.

In the early frosty morning he came round and said walk into the house and have breakfast, my child.

I said, "Oh, my dress is so dirty and untidy." He said, "Oh, you will see we are rough." And then I felt somehow comfortable, if they were rough, and I walked in the cold, and suddenly my breath went away, for there, deep under the field in a well,

like a bride, I saw veils of white and the little village and the white smoke in high streams climbing into the white mist roof spread far under our feet, like a fairy place.

He took me in at the door. In the stone to the room, running feet had worn a hollow bed. The room was rough and full of sun and almost bare and had a wooden bench along one side, to sit on. The woman was old, but she, too, was called "My child" with great sweetness.

They gave me an egg and bread and meat and black tea. Great thick slabs of fat meat, which only the beauty of the old man and woman made it possible to swallow. The old woman talked of the sea a bit and said I "love to see the water shining."

On the wall hung "The Green Fortune Teller." They had a stick with a root at the end carved as a bird's head.

And a little, dancing, smiling, furry cat.

And beautiful glass cups cut like bubble marks.

And on the chimney were beautiful old china groups of Dog Tray and his master—whom they told me carried his tail behind him—and the master was sinking in the sea and Dog Tray dragged him

to land to a moor and saved him, he was always watching the man's face.

Then there was a little china bride sitting beside a great Scotchman.

And the little wooden stool that was his mother's —and that was about all there was.

I loved what was rough and bare there, and plain. I was left with feelings of great hardiness.

And they were both such giants and one was 60 and the other 62 and they were alone.

And he said, "She and Me, We are two."

And they said we are "the Sparrows," that was their name.

I'd only offered them sixpence for my lodging, so they did all this without thought of money; though, of course, I repaid them with a big piece of silver, which I saw the old lady placing with great care in the body of her dress.

I have been wordy in this letter.

I expect I shall be at Whiteway's next week.

With love,

FRANCES JENNINGS.

I am writing this little letter as the cart goes along among the hills. There are a lot of hills—

small hills—and many grouped villages "sitting" on their sides, and hidden down at the bottom. I am thinking a lot about the cold and the ice, thinking of the beauty of the ice, the same as the beauty of a summer, so that I am quite longing to become white, frozen ice!

At Whiteways Colony are a lot of people in rags —and they say "the land is free." And one man said to me, "I have made my land, I had to lift the rocks out of it, and now the land feeds me, and the land now feeds my family of ten!" They say they buy the land and free it. They burn the deeds, and that in some places "we are anathema." The children make harsh cries—shrieks and yells to their mothers to say they are free children. Mostly they wear clogs with pointed metal caps and hammered gleaming nails which are a beautiful shape.

Minchinhampton Common.
Nov. 7.

Is it November? Somewhere near the first, and it is a Friday, I think, but there are only the little feathered birds up in the sky to ask—and they won't tell me.

The lady of the house here wears a silver bee at her neck and treats me, a stranger, as a guest, so I

eat the freshest bread and butter and have my food served me on a white cloth, and the door of her wood-shed is open for me to take fuel as much as I will. A great gale is around me but I am alone in a high-walled lonely yard, and I only hear the sound of the gale—it does not touch me. The air is quiet under here, and Eve, the little ass, does not shiver, but keeps cosy within these walls and I've bought her a great heavy bag of green hay to munch, and give her warm soaked oats, and I feel recuperating in the quiet, for I live at rather high pressure when travelling in the cart.

They made me so warm with wool blankets and bottles of warmth and peppermint drink. Gave me bog peat (so that I felt like an Irish poet) and pine-cones and pretty sticks to burn and gave me meals (little feasts); in fact they did a million small things for me—and somehow I believe they mean to be my friends; but I'm very afraid they bored themselves with all the many things they undertook and carried through for me.

This letter has been lying about and now it is a week later, and it was good of you to forward that letter on towards me.

I am laughing at the country people's horror when

I suggest staying under the open sky in winter. One man says, "Oh, you will be froze dead. Oh, you will be froze hard." And yesterday a woman opened her mouth and said, "Oh Lor! you will be perished!" They portray such fearful possibilities that the prospects of such extremes become more and more tempting. I'm not certain about the cold but I know it would give me an opportunity to make use of splendid, immense fires to warm me.

I notice as the cold increases my fires grow and grow in size. I am burning sweet-smelling fat sticks of larch that I bought along the roads yesterday, and the woman said that they called the little balls "*the fir-apples.*" That's a name I've been seeking a year or so.

I am on an open little plain. The dawn is lucid to my left hand, and the passing sun burns red at my face, so I have two suns.

I also got "A Devil" of coke in working order. That's a red cauldron (when it's alight), terrific looking, red hot with seven times seven burning eyes raying around in its head and a meridian heat.

My furnaces! and blazes! and growing heaps! are my stocks in trade! I find if I light a great, beautiful fire the village people, almost without fail,

come and herd around, and the inhabitants of the houses come attracted out, and more often than not, they dance and sing.

So I know that if I can get plenty of fuel, I've a prospect of seeing beautiful faces and forms and strange ones, and hearing strange speech, and excitement and occasionally the speech of love; and one can have small banquets and feastings together this way—and I like a gay life!

This way I do not find myself alone, but among happy people who like the beauty of a fire under the night sky, and to sit many with one another.

One house, lately, where I was in a little walled yard, "the master of the house" being a carter, one of his fine, great girls said to me in the cold morning, "Oh, were you warm in the night? And father said you should have had *the cat* last night if it wasn't so late."

Cats *are* warm.

With love,

FRANCES JENNINGS.

Whiteways.
12. 12. 12.

To my happiness I find I am laying a deeper grasp on the enigma of the world. When first I

launched out from my confinement I seemed to be unable to reach past the surface.

Now I see the different ways people express their beauty. Some have beauty in their speech, some in their face or aspect, some do beautiful, neat, skilful work, some have romance and wildness, some have a home that seems a delight, a hearth, and meals and love, and possession and comfort. Some delight in families and their education. Some are dreamers, and poets, and writers, and dress beautifully, and have delicate hands—speaking figuratively.

I think I am turning my ass's head back now, owing to the difficulties of winter. I think it will be rather delightful to travel back along the road among friends. I don't think it would be possible to make my way into new country with severe weather hanging over my head. I find public opinion is so strong to the contrary that it would probably prevent me—and there is a limit to individual effort.

I'm rather alone in this field, but I notice that solitude after society makes one's thoughts and desires take clear form for action. The fogs clear off, so to say, and leave two or three great, clear mountains. And one knows what to do, and how to do it, and where to go, and what it is one wants.

Modern ideas are a crying desire with me. I refuse to drug my new self that wants new things with folk-wisdom; however great its beauty, it does not solve the modern world, though it is a part of it. Yet how I dream of the Long Man on the Sussex Hills, and Stonehenge, and Silverbury Hill. I should like to leave a beautiful and immense and almost deathless mark like that on the face of the world. The size of these things appals and fascinates me; they seem to have been made with a thousand hands. I used to watch big flocks of sheep, feeding, walk across the face and body of the Long Man in Sussex, and I always said my prayers to him.

I like to hear the storms raving about my cart—it is wild—as long as they don't harm me.

I am trying to draw again as opportunity offers.

What a tough beast the world is to manage; it quite runs away with me at present, willy nilly, and all over the place. Whichever way I want to go, it goes the opposite, and its head and tail seem generally reversed for unfortunate me. In fact it's impossible—a chaos less permanent than the water of the sea. I mean to ride over it though, if only by pure force of will and tenacity. It makes me laugh though—its impossibility. As they say, though,

there is always some crack one can creep through into everything; but I mean not to creep through cracks, but to take it by storm—to compel it.

December 20, 1912.

I am delayed here (near Stroud) a day or so. When I write no address on my letters, will you know that it means I am altogether uncertain as to where I shall be from day to day, and so it's not safe to chance letters. Your letters make me so happy; you are nice to bother with sending them to me who you scarcely know.

It is a great idea to tell the children stories; I want to compose them myself, though. And they must be very tiny ones to tell on the move. And I shall like them to talk of birds and fishes. I will show the children pretty colours too.

Next I am going to torment you to tell me a subject I can grapple with, with various full-grown men and women who appear in my field. One said to me lately, "For Heaven's sake don't let's talk about cats." I think to talk about travellers and their romance, and their welcomes—a fundamental subject—for they are attracted by the cart. Ulysses

(I can't spell him) is the symbolic traveller, isn't he, in tales?

Now I am rude not to have said "Thank you" for the book that made me feel great emotion when it spoke of the great stars in the dark, and the plain, and the pauses in the singing, and dawning, shining in the distance. I do want to learn some songs, especially such that have dramatic sounds and inarticulate cries among their story.

Then I liked that little table the girl had set, almost altogether. They were nice "crumbs" she had put out. I love frugality.

I quite wanted to eat that page! or lay it (the meal) for a lover.

A meal and a bed—those are beautiful, simple things.

I think I must sleep under the stars, Christmas night, although I am not a Christian and by instinct hate it, but that's a personal matter. I love you somehow or other.

Ledbury.
Jan. 2, 13.

I am unsettled just these days, but in about 5 days I shall have an address. To-morrow I am going to stay with a poet.

My idea is to get into Wales—only partly to live among its mountains and wildness; mostly to sit at the many fire-hearths. I am so curious about the homes of people and just love to be the stranger on the hearth, hearing the family tales and having a finger in the pie, that is to say a share of the supper.

It tears cruelly at the strings of my heart to go away from my many new friends. Each home I leave is a stab and each new house that opens its doors to me is the healing of me.

I get grand welcomes, feed like a prince on the fat of the land! and the more the cold is, the warmer folks see I am.

Many people come and sit with me and speak with me, as if I was their sister or their friend or grandmother.

I am a few miles beyond Ledbury for a few days, at a farm. I have lots of new milk, beautiful fresh butter, new-laid eggs, home-cured bacon, home-made bread (here *the cowman* makes the bread on a great wood fire for all the people on the farm), then I eat their apples. Isn't it nice they thus have their home-stores of food?

I have all sorts of fortunes as far as food goes,

often having to subsist on bread and cheese; and so, when I am fed on good, simple food as here, I feel my health greatly benefits.

I am so happy to be out in the open, noble world, with its gracious manners, its generosity, and its frugality, its gayness and carelessness, instead of to be counting out the pence and grudging and scolding and worrying and becoming atrophied with want of company in a house.

Though, of course, I feel that if now I lived in a house, I should know the way to escape its harm.

I am trying to find faces to draw and am writing a little.

My last two houses have been the threshing-floors of barns—floors of stone.

Why I don't stay longer with people is that I am afraid of wearying them and seeing my welcome turn into boredom. Perhaps when I have stayed in a thousand houses as a voyaging guest, I shall have become accustomed to making a charm of human days instead of weary monotony. I imagine travellers are gay.

With love,

FRANCES JENNINGS.

Dymock, Herefordshire.
10. 1. 13.

I thought I would wait until I could write you a little letter.

I did enjoy opening my parcels, and I love the little soft wool vest you gave me. It satisfies me, body and mind. I love plain things and it is plain and soft and as warm as a small fire. It reminds me of spiders' webs; it's the nicest present I've had.

I was turned away from a house at Dymock yesterday, to which I had made a little three days' journey expecting to be put up for three weeks or so in a barn.

I was tired out as usual when I got to the door, and made a fool of myself by crying and sobbing, as I had to go along the same road again. And, after all, the old man didn't treat me unkindly. He offered me a drink of milk—which would have choked me—and said I could go down in a little green valley far away from the house for a night, but I had no way of getting water that I could think of at that moment, and what upset me was the woman spoke so coldly and with such lack of any sympathy, and laughed and sneered at miserable me.

However, my bitter crying stood me in stead, for a warm-hearted, simple postman overheard me and ran down to a poor person's house at the bottom of the hill and told them it sounded as if there was a child crying inside the cart. And the woman then, in a moment, ran all the way up to me, and she said, "A lady in distress. And they have turned you away from the door, come down to my house," and here I am and may stay as I am "wishful."

They treat me with oceans of sympathy, would have me drink cider rather than water, have a couch for me to use, and I am to walk into the house any moment I wish. They say, "We don't think much of money."

I think I shall be wise to put up 5 to 7 days. I think I have a reliable address at Ledbury, of a big farm, and I have written to it to make sure this morning.

What, too, upset me yesterday was that at the bottom of a steep path leading up to the house the wicked donkey, Eve, after two or three hopeless attempts to pull the cart up the rough, stony road, and having nearly wrecked herself twice by slipping on her knees, said to me in the ass-tongue, "Look here, I'm not going to kill myself with this blessed

cart," and under herself she folded her little knees and down she lay as meek as a lamb on the green grass. And there the wicked little creature lay on her side as if she was dead with the shafts across her; but I knew she wasn't dead, for with a wicked, white, gleaming eye she laughed at me, and the little wretch started biting the green grass within reach of her nose with a smack of her lips at its sweetness—it was nice fine grass. So there she lay as the dead, and I called and called and set up all the trumpeting I could call out of my lungs. And I heard afterwards the people said in the cottages "The hounds are about. I hear the horns—they are near."

And then suddenly two men in the distance spied the fallen donkey and came running, all arms and legs, as if I was in a house on fire.

But on my little journey here I was the happiest voyager and spent two beautiful nights. One at a wayside farm, and the second with a man who had a great orchard.

For I seem to have entered Apple-land, all the talk is of cider, and at each house I stay I see a cider press, and several pocketfuls of apples have come to me.

Do you care to read all this nonsense? I like writing it. The birds have started singing a lot, that sounds to me like the New Year and I see green buds.

You're not to send my letters on, if I give my address too often, and please let me pay for my parcels being sent on.

I meet many Welsh already.

If I travel in the Winter I am not going much faster than a caterpillar—than a "Pillar-cat," as some babies say.

FRANCES JENNINGS.

With the donkey-cart,
Knight's Green,
Dymock,
Herefordshire.
Saturday.

I do love having your letters and my letters.

I am going away from here in two days. Please let me pay for the parcels that come, then I shall be able to write sometimes to shops. Please, please let me. And will you do a little kindness to me?

I want to send the poet and his wife I stayed with, a box of Deventer cakes, those ones made with rye-meal and honey. When you are in London, will you buy the smallest-sized box for me (I suppose with

about a dozen in it), and take the advertisements out of it, and send it to them with my name inside? I am putting in half-a-crown for cost.

I am enclosing the cutting from the *Daily Mirror*. They have made me say a lot of things I did not even say at all. I find the pictures very useful at farms though, where the people can't read, but have eyes to see.

The next farm, seven miles along the road, are cleaning out a shed for me to put up in (five days). I am rather anxious to cover my long journey around the coast of Wales from Aberystwyth to Chester, and "get it over" so to say. It will be such a different thing turning back and knowing my ground.

I am delighted to hear the birds singing, they early have in mind the warm summer, when I shall travel faster and not shiver, and the grass will be dry.

The dearest little farm-girl, a servant, comes to see me in this barn. She is so fat she looks about fifty although she is only seventeen, and she is so small, and hasn't any sense, but once started, laughs and laughs and rolls about laughing and fills the whole barn with loud laughter (giggles isn't the word for it) and tumbles in the heaps of straw and pops out

of it, head and body buried above her knees, and stumbling with laughter.

She says things are most "economical" (*i.e.* comical).

I enclose a portrait she has done of me after the style of the Egyptians.

Who wants words when they have laughing? Her laugh is like a shoal of porpoises.

With love,

FRANCES JENNINGS.

I will write so soon as I have time to ask for letters again.

P.S. This little farm-girl would simply love to have some one to write to, as she has to sit all alone in the evening. I expect your dear Mrs. Summers would be to busy?

Lower Hazel, nr. Tarrington,
Stoke Edith, Herefordshire.
Feb. 13.

Winifred, the farm-girl, sang me such a queer long carol, in the barn one night, that she said her father sang and taught her. It was about "the three Georgarines," and about Jesus having a whipping from the Virgin with the smarting withy—I *was* surprised to hear her sing it. I am in a beautiful

clean shed at this small farm, and shall stay here anyhow until next Thursday. And there seems a gale gathering its blast. The man here speaks very beautiful language and can tell me about gipsies living in turf huts, and beautiful names of apples; and tells me a great tale about how once their house fell on the top of them in a hurricane. I hope you will enjoy being in London. I have often longed to be in a room there this winter, and probably shall be next. I am trying and trying to walk on crutches that I may be able to walk the country instead of ride. I am also thinking of only carrying a tiny trunk and bedding in my cart, so that I can go inside houses more. At present I have to sit like a watchdog over my possessions, while I would much rather sit on hearths and hear talk. There are a lot of things in the world I find. How much I treasure what *slight* personal love you seem to show me.

Bunshill Farm,
Bridge Sollars,
Near Herefordshire.
15. 3. 13.

I do have such difficulty in making purchases from nearly any shop. The shopkeepers *won't* come out into the street in answer to my signals, and when they do they're mostly like frightened hares; and say they

stock not a single one of the things I want, and bolt into their burrows again.

I've had *no* answer from London yet, so am delayed, much against my will.

I shall have to move on to Leominster in my waggon if I cannot go to London on Tuesday, because I seem to lack even the chief necessities here, barring partial shelter. I am in a draught enough to lift a haystack.

(Later.)

I have been disappointed about the loft in Limehouse; it is no longer the property of my friends. So I must go on to the next farm that is only two days' journey, and where there is a barn or shed in which I can go. I must carefully consider things—London (and a big fire to sit by) does appeal to me. I shall probably set to work to find a room in London with a big fireplace in it and plenty of space for models—and alternate town and country through the year, and see how it works.

The Farm next the Railway Station,
Ford Bridge, nr. Leominster,
Herefordshire.
25. 3. 13.

I have arrived here a little tired. And my cart is put up in the solidly built barn, so I shall not

suffer from cold. And the people seem anxious to show me great kindness. I made a good little journey, putting up one night on my road and passing across beautiful land around the foot of a great hill. I had to cross a flood in one place, the only ways out were under water, but the donkey plunged in gallantly. Then I stopped at a bright cottage, and paid fourpence for some tea and bread and butter, and the old mother made me a pancake (of all things!); it was a good one too!

I've written several letters with a view to finding a pleasant room in London. It is so nice to have you to write to first of all, immediately I arrive in my somewhat lonely barns. I do love their wooden beams and planks, though, so cunningly pieced and designed, and such a warm golden colour. My present barn is simply a sea of "carvings" (husks and straw) only "relieved" by a small heap of mangels and me. It's a lovely golden sea toppling down in big waves, and soft and warm. I have three small white window-holes pierced in the massive stone foundation, through which, as some ancient maiden in a tower, I look out over distant lands falling, and streams twisting, and rising hills, and sheep.

I was so pleased with my big packet of letters this morning. I feared I should be cut off from them for two days the river rose in flood. I had two favourable letters from houses farther ahead, so I practically have an open road now as far as Shrewsbury. I find this house was once a nunnery on the river bank, a small chapel stands in a field near. It is very like a house in a tale. It has two blind rooms inside, *i.e.* black with no windows—perhaps they were punishment cells.

(Next day.)

I am being most kindly treated, warmed, and fed, and put in a little shed by the house door—all for very little money. How dearly I should love an occasional companion in voyaging. I should be delighted if your friend would ever come with me. And, now that I have found out that barns and sheds are practically obtainable anywhere, she would not have to suffer any great hardship. At present I am sitting in the sun in the doorway of my shed, for this is beautiful weather. One of the things that has troubled me so much with this cart has been troubling other people's friends. I saw no other way at first; but now I am independent in finding my houses upon the road. The people at this house

are just putting me up after my wretchedness in the last farm. I feel I'm recovering by leaps and bounds.

I have found rooms, I'm so happy to say. At least there seems almost a certainty that I may rent them.

They are two small attics in Chelsea, a very pretty shape. Up three little steps is a beautiful flat roof where I can sleep in the open air and walk, and from which one sees the water of the Thames. They are flush against the tower of the old church in Cheyne Walk. . . . I think they are over what was, or is, a school for the simple life.

I've not half explored that parcel yet. There were some nice things in it—a G.W.R. list of farms in all counties, some queer magazines, and a pleasant, welcoming letter from a Gipsy and Folk-lore Club, and other bundles of farm addresses on my road, and endless other useful things.

I am so delighted with all the things that are happening in my little world, and I should love to give you a kiss for your share in them. I don't think one is ever so beautiful to other people as when one is in great happiness.

There's a beautiful washing of water around this house all day.

Ford Farm,
Ford Bridge, nr. Leominster,
Herefordshire.
2. 4. 13.

I am just buying a directory of Shropshire (a happy inspiration) that gives the name of all the farms and their owners in every town and village. I believe that will solve all my difficulties of finding houses across the country. Because I know that at least at one out of every five farms they are only too pleased to have even such a humble "lodger" as me.

The Chelsea rooms are mine from May 1st. How happy I feel at the prospect of a little (attic) permanent home. I have a good many friends about Chelsea.

The mistress here is a sweet person.

She has—

A dark mole dress on Sundays
a scarlet petticoat
and a little green cloak.

Round her door
wind a honeysuckle and a vine

On her wall
a plum tree; and a pot of wild thyme there and a clove plant.

I shall be here, probably, till early Tuesday morning. I am constantly drawing, though mostly it's only my own face in the glass.

Don't I travel slowly? but soon I hope to make a spurt ahead. For my strength is equal to travelling three days out of seven. What fun it is to discover the secret of how to go to any place one likes. I feel wiser than a railway train.

Leominster.
5. 4. 13.

This is just to catch you before you are away.

Perhaps I shall not be able to go to London just in the start of May. It will depend upon how much I have in hand for travelling expenses, but I expect I shall have plenty.

Once I reach Holywell, I mean to travel back the same road with slight variations.

At present it's rather amusing; the average is one "yes" to five "noes" in answer to my letters inquiring about sheds, offering to pay 1/- a single night, or 6*d*. a night for a longer stay.

I find county directories are very high priced and not published yearly, but each town of any importance publishes a yearly almanac and abridged directory for about a penny (or free).

I have to exercise my wits to compose letters to the different people ahead who I think will tell me of any inhabitants willing to put me up.

I have two houses to go to at Ludlow 15 miles ahead. One is a humble little inn, "The Angel," but with kindly disposed people. I think, though, the yard of an inn is a fit place for me only for a *single* night, when nothing else can be had. The other I shall stay at four days. (Both have sheds, I am glad to say.) Isn't this a queer journey? but I am learning such a lot as how to establish freedom and "the Open Road." First hand experience, though difficult, is an absolute proof of *what is*. But it's as difficult as being born again to travel like this.

I shall like to be loved by a cake. Things is more than words—more solid anyway! but not so cunning. The thought of London and ideas makes me happy.

I hope you will have pleasure abroad.

With the donkey-waggon,
Liverpool House,
Broughton, nr. Chester,
18. 5. 13.

How glad I am you are in England again. I did miss you so while you were away. I felt quite a

sensation of loneliness finding none of your writing with my letters.

I am in a barn-house here for another four days; it is a shed used for dances, at the back of the village shop and opens both ends; this end on a nice yard and the other on a green field. It's 30 or 40 ft. long with a planked floor. Since I wrote I've been to Holywell and back—a four days' journey for my donkey.

I drove the waggon along a road high up above the mouth of the River Dee. I saw many donkeys. There are a hundred on Halkin mountain, so I shall know where to go to buy one when I want one. I saw some pulling carts in pairs, and nearly every field has a donkey of some colour in it, which delighted me.

The nuns in Holywell put my donkey-waggon up. There seemed almost twenty nuns: I liked being among them. The nuns keep a hospice at St. Winefred's Well, and any pilgrim to the well with a letter from the priest is boarded and lodged there for a shilling a day.

I drove the waggon down to the well, down a fearful hill. A man carried me into the water, and plunged me underneath, head and all. The shock of the cold was so great that my limbs stuck out

straight and rigid, and I couldn't open my eyes, and it made me cry out, I suppose for want of breath. But a moment or two after, to my surprise, I was all rosy and glowing. I had a dreadful cold and cough, too, when I was put in, but it didn't make me worse. I shall hope to go to St. Winefred's Well again, for it did make me feel well, and it was a beautiful clear day they put me under. As usual I am tired, only having arrived back here yesterday evening. So was the poor little donkey, and she had a longing, too, to taste the fresh, pale green, spring grass which made her walk crooked from side to side of the road. Now, though, she's going to run in a field till Thursday and rest her poor, small hoofs, so as to go dancing along again.

I am going to think over things in this barn-house, and I expect my wisest plan will be to return the way I have come. I shall only stop one night at each of the less interesting houses, and as long as is good with the great friends I've made in four or five places. I expect this way I may reach Hampshire in six weeks or so at the most.

I had a dreadful disappointment about those two attics in Chelsea. I had to give them up at the last moment.

It would really be a pity now the air is warm, and the trees green, to go and stifle in London where the air is more used up.

Don't you think it would be a wise plan to stay about with friends in London, as I do in my waggon, with people like artists or literary people, and take my leisure in finding an empty room I could keep on as a permanency? It seems it would be so difficult to find the sort of room I want, for I don't want one in an ordinary house of apartments. I am so disappointed about the others, that, to tell the truth, I don't feel like beginning the search again immediately.

My old idea was to have a room in London I could use as headquarters of my waggon life.

I have had varied welcomes, some great and some tepid, the little way I have retraced. "One takes one's chances when one gambles with fate, or with people, and must win or lose with the same smile."

I know the actual journeying with the waggon is as delightful as anything could be. The last journey I drew in, in the heat of the day, on the turf of a great, green, flowery common. It was as paradise, only I was alone.

Forgive this stupid, stupid letter; the heat is so

great. I am sitting at a tent door I've taken possession of these few nights, on its green carpet.

How little one can do alone.

Human beings are what make reality of vague dreams. I think the world would be perfect under the blue sky with several great, different personalities for company, doing beautiful acts, and being together.

Instead, here I am, ugly in dress, tired in health, alone, and no great personalities within reach, in fact feeling and looking sordid and prosaic.

I suppose if one has few things one can have them beautiful; I am going to run away from my possessions and difficult thought, and escape naked, and simple, and beautiful.

With love,

FRANCES JENNINGS.

I have drawn 17 heads in my book so far, so I feel very happy at the thought of drawing once more. I have to get my drawings done in five minutes, which is very good for me as it keeps me to simple plans. I've got 24 now. I just do the outlines, and find people most willing to sit motionless for five or six minutes.

The Raven,
Whitchurch Heath,
Salop.

I love Midsummer Day; how nice it would be if I saw your little fairies on the common on Midsummer Day. Yes, Holywell is a well people for centuries have pilgrimaged to. It is a tremendous spring, I think four tons of water come out every minute or so—I've forgotten exactly. A chapel is above the spring. The water is a beautiful blue-green, and deep as the neck, and never ceases to spring, and the hill to it is so steep that it seemed as if my waggon would fall headlong from the upland into the sea at the bottom.

I think I must buy a large tin trunk to store my note-books and letters in; then I should not feel so anxious. I want to carry nothing valuable in my waggon—in fact, to travel practically with an empty waggon. At present, some of my manuscript books are at one house, some at another, and only in basket hampers. If I collected them in one large weather-proof trunk, and gave them in charge of a reliable person, it would save me a lot of anxiety.

I did enjoy your letters and my letters.

I am always dreaming of Midsummer Day and Night, and you having your infants on a common

is just the real place for it, for the fairies keep to wild land, and it's that night they have their dances on the green. In fact, I've heard there's a green somewhere in England that's called "Midsummer Green."

I see no chance, dear friend, of bringing the waggon all that way by June 21st. I'm too lazy! At present I think I'm leaving the waggon here—near to the doorway of Wales and its mountains—and going to Mrs. Abercrombie and her husband if they can have me at Dymock, Glos. for two weeks or so, by train, to have a little change from the waggon.

I am trying to get the rods of a gipsy tent and to sew the cover of one. Then, when I go to stay with friends, I shall travel by train and put up the tent in their gardens for sleeping.

I'll take your advice about the room in London. I've already written to one other friend about it.

The thing would be to get a room with some open-air attachment to it—an open roof or a balcony. At the top of a house preferably—as one is not bothered by tramping overhead or people passing one's landing.

Also with a big fireplace—for that's the chief joy of winter. Nearly all my rooms in London, so far,

have been in some queerly-shaped old house, with slanting ceilings or queer chimneys inside the room. Of course some sort of shed or loft is jolly, as one has plenty of space, and I could arrange a stove separately. But I want to be right in London *not* in the suburbs.

Thus I've written out what I like above—*suppose by any chance* you came across or heard of anything.

The above is what I'd like, in a room not only for storing my small possessions in safety, but also for *living* in, especially in winter.

Anything romantic! and for small money. If it was possible to find the two combined.

You are nice to let me discuss my affairs with you.

I am at c/o Mrs. Sadler, The Raven Inn, Whitchurch Heath, Salop, *until Thursday week.* Or rather letters will find me there, as that is my headquarters while I go round exploring the peat-mosses and little wild common, making friends, etc. This summer I'm going to make steady practice on my crutches. It is such a beautiful morning, the birdlings are singing sweetly on the soft green heath that I feel I love you.

At this Raven Inn, which stands alone on a heath

of from 500 to 1000 acres, many farmers, etc., meet to drink. It's kept by a woman who is a lady! She has the gentlest manners. She gets the farmers, horse-trainers, hunters, keepers to sit for me to draw their heads when they've had a drink and a little sit down. And when I've done the drawings she comes and carries the man off so that he shan't annoy me by silly talk. This way I shall meet some splendid characters, and splendid faces.

I've not got the patience to travel back the same road I have come, and by the same (eighty!) houses.

No—now I am going to choose Wales as my travelling country; but I shan't travel in the winter.

What a nice possession a little blue wooden waggon is, with a white hood. A thing like that gives one a certain small power in the world, and means of making friendships and delighting people, and is a charm. It's a little more than oneself. I rather like a half-public life—it's seven times richer than being shut up in a room and desolate.

I am curious to meet all types of men, all sorts of people there are in the world, *provided* they are reasonable, and keep their proper distances.

Though it's at the sacrifice of a certain sensitiveness and unworldliness, the product of living alone and choosing my own dreams and ideas.

With love,

FRANCES JENNINGS.

Tell me of yourself, always, *when* you have time to write a letter.

P.T.O.

If I cannot go to the people at Glos.—perhaps they have other friends staying with them—*shall I* travel up to Steep by train for Midsummer bringing my gipsy tent with me and pitch it in a secluded corner of some one's garden? And just bringing a little bundle with me, a drawing-book, a book for writing thought, and my crutches, and a change of clothes. I should bring a sack for bedding, and stuff it with shavings, or heather, or straw when I arrived.

Then how I should love to draw you all, and sit for you.

If they'll have me at Gloucester, I should probably stay three weeks. I have to consider railway fares, you see; and mustn't leave my donkey more than three weeks, or it will get too lazy and wicked for anything.

With love to you.

Dymock.
20. 6. 13.

I've been trying all these days to write, but the heat has made me prostrate.

I've travelled down by train to Dymock, near Gloucester, with a gipsy tent. I am very comfortable and happy in my tent in the fine weather. It is shaped like an arch. I made it of peat hazel boughs. It has balsam laid on the floor spread with sheepskins. Also I've made a beautiful dress, a blue dress with many green stripes sewn on it.

A forester fetches me faggots to burn. I cook milk soup for supper nearly all nights, and have much talk with people with romantic sense.

If ever I come to Steep I shan't come bothering you, I shall myself (by letter) find a place. This little holiday from my waggon is a great success, and I'm glad to think the little donkey is happy in a field of rich grass in Shropshire.

I do want to find you again one day. Human beings with ideas are such most precious things.

7. 7. 13.

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

I am always thinking about you in your letters. I kept Midsummer Day too. I hung the brown

tent with green wreaths and roses and had a supper feast at night.

Four of us wore beautiful coloured garments and sat round a great fire of pear-tree wood, larch sprays and fir cones.

And we sang rounds like

Come Follow! Follow! Follow! Follow!
Follow! Follow! Follow! ME.
Whither shall I follow? follow? follow?
To the Greenwood,
To the Greenwood,
To the Greenwood,
Greenwood Tree!

I am so happy, but my stay here ends on next Thursday, and I must go back to the Raven at Whitchurch to pay my respects to Mrs. Sadler for three weeks. Then I mean to go another train journey with my tent.

I long for the mountains of Wales and the sea and peasants' faces and speech.

But my art and happiness are doubled if I am living with beautiful educated people, who know how to decorate beautiful houses, and make beautiful food, and know strange and various books, and wear beautiful dresses, and do beautiful acts!

Of course I should love greatly to come to Steep, for there such things are. But I am afraid it would be most difficult to find a place.

Here I am on a small piece of waste ground, inside the garden, under five great elms, well secluded from intruders, being only 35 yards or so from the house.

I have *two* tents; they only take up a length of about 21 feet. And really only one is necessary.

I have bought a stack of wood and put it by the side of my tent.

The servant brings all my meals from the house, for which I pay their cost price of 10*s.* a week! (not including fuel).

Then I pay a child of fifteen 2*s.* a week to do my washing-up, fetch fresh water and so on for one hour a day. I can afford 3*s.* 6*d.* a week rent too.

I just tell you that this is the way I manage best. But of course it is not always possible to have everything done for one.

I am trying to write a fantastic tale about a peasant feast. That's especially why I want to get among modern, educated people, for it makes one want to express oneself.

And here also I draw as many faces as I care to.

I am so interested about dresses—describe to me any beautiful ones you know of, if you have the energy.

There's a cherry orchard near (almost) my tent in which a "cathedral" bell rings to scare the birds away. They sell the orchard of cherries every year—a rich old woman's going to buy it this year.

When I go back to the Raven I shan't sleep in my waggon. I shall put up my gipsy tent under a blasted yew there and buy a stack of peat. Eighteen slabs of peat only cost a penny there.

Partly why I am so happy is that I keep hearing new ideas. There are two poets here now and a third is coming in the week, and they talk in splendid fashion.

And also a tent in a garden is five times as healthy and comfortable as a waggon in a shed.

We eat here out of beautiful Brittany dishes with thumb-pieces and men-peasants wearing yellow hoods painted on them, or in blue with magenta foldings. The tents are arranged like this facing one another with a fire between.

They look like great black arches of hooded fishes' mouths.

I'm tired now. So I'll say good-bye.

Yours affectionately,

FRANCES JENNINGS.

The Raven Inn,
Whitchurch Heath,
Salop.

I stayed three extra days in Glos. with a blacksmith's wife, and slept in an open float under a "forest" of great green oaks.

I was delighted to have your letter, and how much the little pamphlet interested me, especially when it tells one not to cut the woven stuff more than is necessary. I've always longed to have a seamless vest. I wonder if you know where one can buy woven lamb's wool, and if one can buy it dyed beautiful hues. I'm making all my clothes shirt-shape, as most comfortable, but I draw them in round the middle with a string.

What beautiful names the Morris Dances have—some of them.

I like your idea of gingerbread stalls on the common at Midsummer. I've just been reading a book about a golden maiden (in gingerbread), and

I've heard one also used to be able to buy gold hearts in gingerbread. And your description of the families seated on the green did sound like past days.

What do you think of all these old gaieties, and beautiful ancient speeches, and houses, and implements, one finds in the country? In one book it made them say, "We are sparks of a dying fire"! Or do you think they are the sole immortals in the world?

Somehow I don't think it would be fair on you for me to come to Steep. I think, perhaps, I was ill-mannered even to press the idea at all. I ought, perhaps, more to go to places that invite the public—seeing in a way that at present I'm rather thrown on the public, and not put my rude and silly manners and sluggish apathy and conceit on nice people (like you and the others at Steep) as an uninvited guest; but to take what comes, and go on somehow or other, not caring where I am or who I am with.

Just to reply to your very kind letter, though, that time I was on the common I was never alone, children, or boys, or a man or woman or so had their eyes on me the whole time. And it made things very awkward for me; for one thing I didn't like to lie down, and stretch my limbs, and take a rest

under the open sky, thus under the public eye. It is more sensible of me to tell the truth about it. Though otherwise wasn't the common a most beautiful place and wild ground is the most healthful.

Of course, the vegetable garden sounds the very place.

But, candidly, what I feel about the whole thing is, that although I would love to pay visits to people who read new books, and know about new plays, and who are interested in many modern doings, the benefit is almost entirely on my side. They, unhappily, get but my ill-natured and dull personality.

So is it fair to trouble people with myself, except I am in absolute independence.

A drawing of mine has just been printed in a new magazine called the *Blue Review*, published at the Poetry Bookshop, Theobald's Road; but it's a drawing I did before I fell ill. As soon as I do a good one, I shall send it to you to see, and ask you to tell me what you think. I've fifty heads now, but they're all bound in a book which I am hasting to fill. Don't you think it would be good if I started a book of imaginations, tales, dreams, and so on, too?

I am making great progress with the crutches, but I expect it will take a year really to do anything

worth speaking of. I can walk on an average 30 steps without a rest.

But often I lack opportunity to practise daily. I have a splendid opportunity here now. The Miss Cummins were very kind to invite me, I liked the youngest one. Was her name Louie?

Forgive this somewhat mournful letter. How nice you are to me, and how constant, you put a lot of happiness and keenness into me.

With love,

FRANCES JENNINGS.

I am here on and off for about three weeks. I do welcome the letters you post on to me.

Whitchurch,
25. 7. 13.

I was pleased to have your letter when I came back from a two days' journey. I will come on the 6th, since you say that will be a good day. It will be a nice little expedition for me, *especially* if you like me to come among you. I am not the least used to being among a lot of people, and since I cannot walk I shall feel dreadfully shy. No one here knows how to look up trains, so I shall have to see how I can link up the different changes as I go along.

That's what I did when I went to Gloucester. I had to change three times, and get myself carried seven times, so I feel experienced. I expect I shall arrive hideously tired, and speechless with fatigue for a day after, even.

I'm afraid you'll rather laugh at my tent; it's a somewhat crooked piece of architecture. It has 17 ribs and a backbone. I feel I want to build whole villages of them, it looks such a humpy beast. I think to-morrow I am going out for a little journey to find heads to draw. I found seven heads to draw my last journey.

I've started drawing a second book of heads; they are grotesque. I am trying a book of black paper for painting in a decorative fashion, such things as blue and green undulations and many coloured flamings, and trees as they are when seen in artificial light—a strange blue-green.

I am trying desperately to write, but feel very much at sea. I shall love to hear of the beautiful things you know of.

Ellesmere.
7. 8. 13.

I *do* feel I have wasted your time and patience. I really did want to come to Steep, and up to the last

moment meant to come. But I got so worried at the thought of the journey. I read there were such crowded trains, and I found I should have to travel up to Crewe, and down to London, and drive across London to another station to get the train to Petersfield. And then I began to wonder what I should do in the tent if wet weather came on, for I should have to shut up its wide front, and then it is dark inside, and rather suffocating. When I was in Gloucestershire there was a cottage I could take refuge in in wet weather that made it possible. Also I felt so queerly and roughly dressed to travel by train. I felt too depressed to face peoples' stares.

I am hasting, in my empty waggon, towards Wales, the valley of the Dee, I think. I am writing this at midday at the edge of the wave of White Mere (Ellesmere) giving the donkey its midday rest.

I wish I had not been so *careless* as to put you to so much trouble. Please do forgive me! It is so difficult to put theory into practice, and my visit to Steep was theory, for the practice of which I was not yet sufficiently equipped. Yet how I wish I was there, and that the sun always shone.

On this wistful note the story of the tour ends.

The tour itself was nearly over, for in September Frances returned to her former quarters in Rectory Chambers, Chelsea. I saw her shortly after her arrival. She was sitting on the floor of an empty room, exactly as she would have turned in for the night by the wayside. Her mattress was spread with sheep-skins, a many-coloured Arab trunk held her books and papers, and the rest of her luggage was tied up in bundles. A little fire burned brightly in the grate, a mug of tea steamed beside her, and as I entered she was hacking open a tin of condensed milk with a bill-hook! Even in Chelsea—that place of unlikely sights—the scene was unparalleled. She was dressed in a sacking garment, travel-stained and torn; an emerald cap hid from my reproachful eyes the fact that she had cut short her beautiful hair. An old battered crock or two stood about giving the gipsy touch; and in the midst of this picturesque muddle Frances's lovely face shone out like a flower on a rubbish heap.

She was happy to be in London again, and looked forward to seeing her friends and meeting new and interesting people. She was also glad to relax after the strain of the exposed and shifting life of the last two years. She did not speak much of her

adventures. She felt that the tour had been a failure; she never wished to repeat the experiment. I think she felt the awakening from her dream of a splendid adventure more keenly than her friends realized. Anyhow, though she did not avoid the subject, she never introduced it. But she was still eager in the chase after the elusive ideal: life still promised her Beauty and the joy of following her star wheresoever it might lead her.

Her work, however, was fitful: her power of concentration was weak, and her management of her resources reckless. She would work on her energies at top speed for a short time, to fall utterly exhausted for days together.

She considered the possibility of once more attending the Slade School, but rejected the plan as impracticable. Even models meant a waste of time and money, as a few minutes' work had to be followed by a long rest.

She therefore took the only course of study open to her, and made endless drawings of her own face in the glass. She struggled with problems of light and shade, trying different methods of reproduction; but in the end she fell back on the quick line drawings of profiles like those she had made during her tour.

They did not satisfy her, but she felt incapable of more exacting work. I quote from a letter in which she refers to her struggles in this direction :

"I think my drawing is prospering greatly. I have left those drawings of many planes all muddled. I believe I have made maddening efforts to do impossibilities in them. Now I am drawing as subtly as I can in line, and know where I am. I feel very likely I shall discover the other way by happy chance as I go along naturally."

During the winter she started carving fantastic heads out of solid blocks of wood, about a foot long by six inches in diameter. These grotesques she called "puppets"; she had some half-formulated idea of writing folk-plays to be performed with these puppets. She experimented for some months, but afterwards abandoned the idea, and burnt all her carvings except one weird little mummy-like object, which might well be mistaken for prehistoric art. It serves as an excellent illustration of the extraordinarily original bent of Frances's mind. She could take nothing at second hand; not because of any deliberate wish on her part to be exceptional, not because she was unteachable or unwilling to learn, but because her wizard touch transformed the most commonplace thing

into something strange and rare. To watch her make herself a frock was to see the first woman sewing the first garment—the very stitches were evolved from her own mind, and were certainly unlike those she had been taught to make at the "Charity School."

Not that the strange things were mostly beautiful —Frances herself did not think them that—they were just creations: inevitable.

But these constant failures, and increasing ill-health, told terribly on her spirits. She would not go out, and though she lived and slept beside widely-opened windows she felt stifled after her life in the open. Her only "outing" was to pack, and be off to new rooms; and this she did every three or four months. Her friends encouraged her in her hunts for a congenial habitation, as each move was a little distraction and a fresh adventure. She would be carried downstairs, and placed in a greengrocer's or "remover's" cart, surrounded by all her worldly goods and chattels, and arrive at her new abode quite unperturbed by—even unconscious of—the amazement of the landlady on beholding her extraordinary lodger. Well for Frances that her friends were of the conventional-looking, highly respectable type that could effectually prepare the way for her!

From time to time new treatment would be tried: a course of massage, a fresh medical opinion. Nothing, however, was of any use to her—nothing could make any headway against her own reckless treatment of herself. She began to fade visibly. The colour had long left her face; now the gold vanished from her hair, and the sparkle from her eyes. She began to think of herself as dying; indeed, she looked forward to death as the last adventure, and the only cure for the ache of life. To her friends, too, it seemed that her life must end soon; they now only humoured her and played with her, welcoming any distraction that might relieve for a little while the weight of melancholia that was pressing her under. Here is a charming letter she wrote when she believed that Death might any day come and take her.

474 King's Road,
Chelsea.
December 24, 1914.

DEAR ——

I feel such extraordinary happiness if I may possess you in the smallest way, as one setting out on a great adventure. For we are two selves. But I am a soul alone on a great tower. But I am a

great cry—the self of me is. I want to call the names of beautiful people to the possessors of the names, but it is a difficult thing.

For six years now I have played a long, elaborate game—as I imagine Persians play fantastic and skilful games all alone in great solitude—and at last I have forgotten the world and can only play. The game is, in a way, calling the names of the selves of Beauty in great procession.

But I do possess about three living people, otherwise I could not play the game and not die. Will you be one of the puppets in my grand game, perhaps your selves will have fifteen or a thousand different names or only one.

I am a dying thing, falling into great silences, but if you will say my Name with your Mind to me, I cannot die.

These last three days I sometimes could only lift my fingers faintly. But next week I shall be almost gay.

I shall write you cards, but don't let us answer one another for good manners.

Some small happinesses I possess—you will laugh—a small green orange-tree with six oranges hanging on it.

A supper of shell-meat (shell-fish seven a penny)
6 grains of red cinders are my jewels.
And I have a purple-cheeked lady—
(Great cheeks as purple earth of a rare Planet)
To-night I will lazily call myself Frances "The New" and you "Bitter-sweet Mary, my Sister."

But Death delayed, and life became more and more unbearable. She at last found rooms that she liked—overlooking the river in Cheyne Walk. From there she steadily refused to move. Some change was strongly urged by a doctor brought in by a distracted friend. This doctor held out a long life to Frances; and, as life as she then lived it was intolerable, she at last half consented to go away for a time. The where and when were under consideration; hurry seemed both unnecessary and undesirable.

What happened at the end no one can know. The idea of a long life may have shocked her to desperation; the thought of a change and the probability of some control, however slight, perhaps frightened her. Most probable of all, the idea may have occurred to her that never again would she be free to live and die as she willed;

and this decided her. She wrote, in her usual hand, "I go to happy Death"—and died by her own act.

She died on October 1, 1915; her last words to those who helped her at the end, "Thank you, dear friends!"



PLATE 2.

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PLATE 8.

UNIV. OF MICH.



PLATE 4.

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PLATE 5.

UNIV. OF MICH.



PLATE 5.

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PLATE 6.

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PLATE 7.





PLATE 8.


UNIV.
OF
MICH.



PLATE 9.





PLATE 10.





PLATE 11.





PLATE 12.

UNIV. OF MICH.



PLATE 18.

UNIV. OF MICH.



PLATE 14.





PLATE 15.

UNIV. OF MICH.



PLATE 16.





PLATE 17.





PLATE 18.





PLATE 19.

UNIV. OF MICH.



PLATE 20.

UNIV. OF MICH.



PLATE 21.

UNIV. OF MICH.

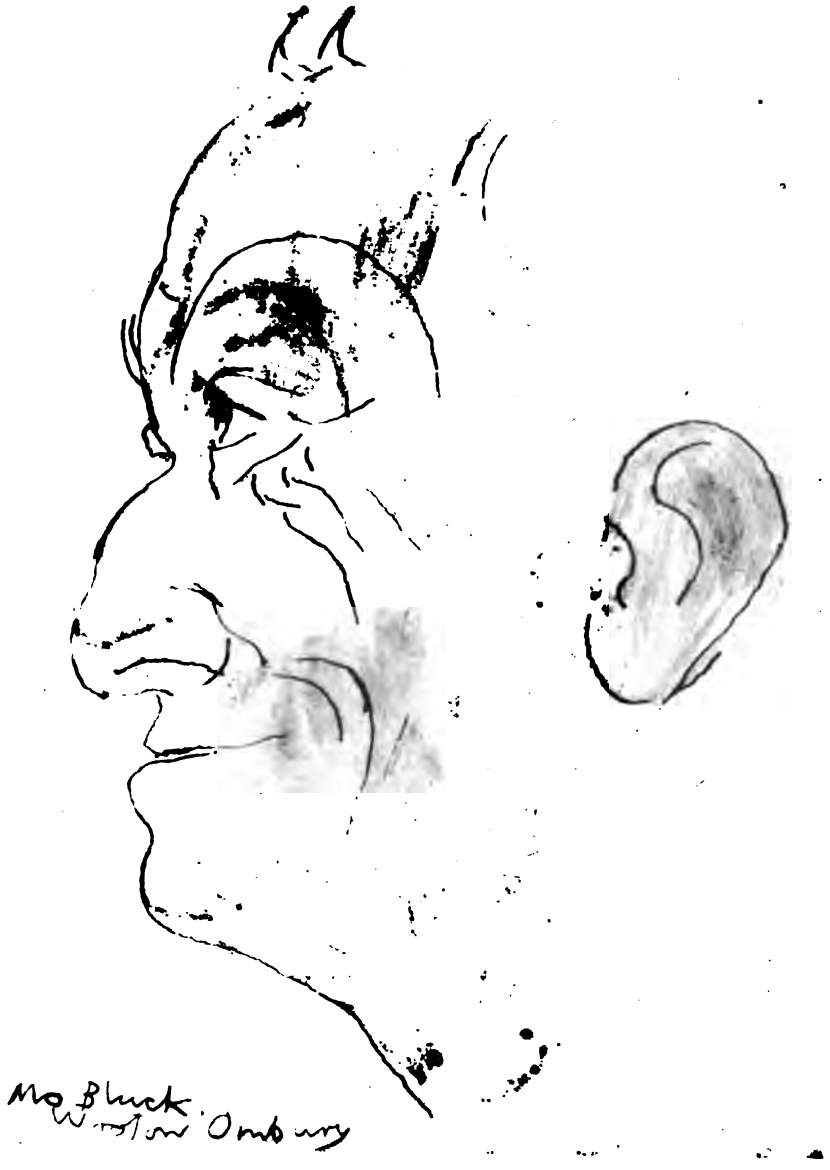


PLATE 22.

UNIV. OF MICH.



PLATE 23.





PLATE 24.





Jack

PLATE 25.

UNIV. OF MICH.



PLATE 26.





PLATE 27.

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PLATE 28.

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PLATE 29.





PLATE 30.





PLATE 31.